

FRIDAY BULLETIN

NEWS FROM THE ALASKA DIVISION OF LIBRARIES, ARCHIVES & MUSEUMS

12/11/2015

This newsletter is available weekly and previous issues are available at <http://lam.alaska.gov/fridaybulletin>.

Submissions for the Friday Bulletin should be sent to linda.thibodeau@alaska.gov and may be edited for content and length if used.

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NEWS FROM THE DIVISION

WEBINAR 12/18 9AM – CUSTOMIZE YOUR WIRELESS NETWORK

The Library Development section of the State Library is offering the following webinar next Friday:

CUSTOMIZE YOUR WIRELESS NETWORK

December 18, 2015, 9 a.m.

Are you unhappy with how your wireless network is set up? Do you yearn for better security, different time limits, change your network name or more? If so, come spend an hour learning how to customize common wireless networks.

To join our webinar, visit <http://library.alaska.gov/dev/techtalks.html> . Questions about this webinar may be directed to Daniel Cornwall at daniel.cornwall@alaska.gov.

VISTA RACHAEL BAZZETT SHARES A YEAR IN ALASKA

As part of November's Digital Literacy Intensive, we asked participants to create videos on anything that occurred to them. Rachael Bazzett, a VISTA stationed in Coffman Cove, put together a fast paced reflection on her time in Alaska we think you will enjoy. She posted her video to YouTube and it can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FHZYoFLD570>.

NEWS FROM L.A.M.S IN ALASKA

CONGRATULATIONS DONA! (I LOVE MY LIBRARIAN AWARD)

Dona J. Helmer, librarian at College Gate Elementary School in Anchorage has received the I Love My Librarian Award for her outstanding public service to the community and ongoing commitment to transforming lives through education and lifelong learning. Ms. Helmer was one of only 10 librarians within the United States recognized this year for this esteemed honor. Ms. Helmer provides an invaluable hands-on approach to learning that opens up new worlds for students. Though grants, Ms. Helmer has funded numerous field trips to enhance what students are studying in the classroom. For a farm-to-school program, she organized trips to the botanical garden for tours and lectures about plants and soils. She led field trips to a performing arts center for students to experience live theater, many for the first time.

Ms. Helmer also addresses the needs of the school and greater community. She established a library club and store where students can earn "Dewey dollars" to buy supplies they can't otherwise afford. She developed a program on homelessness. Students research the local problem on the Internet and brainstorm possible solutions. Additionally, the students make fleece blankets to donate to a homeless shelter. Ms. Helmer received a \$5,000 prize at an award ceremony in New York City, hosted by Carnegie Corporation of New York, which sponsors the award. The New York Public Library and The New York Times are co-sponsors of the award, which is administered by the American Library Association.

For a listing of other I Love My Librarian winners, see <http://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/blogs/the-scoop/i-love-my-librarian-award-winners-announced/>

THE FIRST ANNUAL HOUR OF CODE EVENT AT UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA SOUTHEAST

Following an invitation from Freya Anderson at the Alaska State Library, UAS Librarian (Jennifer Ward) collaborated with two Associate Professors of Information Systems (Colleen McKenna and Eve Dillingham) to host a special Hour of Code event at the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS). Shay Wilson and Daniel Cornwall provided additional support on the day of the event.

The global movement "[Hour of Code](#)" happens each year on December 7-13. UAS planned to kick off a session a week earlier during the lunch hour on November 30th. This was during finals, a busy time for all. This event was planned as a fun lunchtime educational activity break geared to staff. The UAS team was eager to promote computing literacy for adult learners, and endeavored to make it a fun, non-threatening introduction to coding.

Activities focused on a short introduction to Hour of Code and why computer science and logical problem-solving is so important in our daily work. In an analog activity (Stepping Stones) volunteers had to write very detailed, specific, instructions and became the "coder" and the "computer" – this activity got a few laughs! Then, participants wrote their First Code with one of the tutorials on the code.org/learn

website using block-based coding to write Javascript. Participants were enthusiastic to learn these skills and appreciated the follow-up completion certificates and further resources on coding to pursue on their own time.

Future Hour of Coding activities will follow at UAS. There are many great teaching materials online and the state library was so helpful in supporting this event!



UAS Hour of Code Team: L-R Shaw Wilson, Colleen McKenna, Eve Dillingham and Jennifer Ward.

OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS

IN PRAISE OF MAIL SERVICES

Tara Neilson, the writer of the blog “Alaska For Real by a Daughter of the Walrus” (www.alaskaforreal.com) is a big fan of libraries and librarians. With her permission, we are sharing the text of her 12/1/2015 posting “Love Affair With The Library; Thank You, Mail Services”:

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I was fifteen when our principal/teacher at our bush school arranged for me to become a rural patron of the Juneau Public Library, several hundred miles away. That's when I was first introduced to the librarians who worked in the mail services program, and I've been in love ever since. I've had books from

them forwarded to me wherever I wander in Alaska, when I'm away on jobs in the summers, or housesitting, or visiting relatives. The library's books have had many adventures with me over the years. They traveled to their home with me on a ferry trip once, and I was able to return them in person to the Juneau Public Library and meet at least one of the librarians who spent so much time and energy on getting me exactly what I was looking for whenever I made a request.

The books, to reach me, are flown by jet to Ketchikan, then to the nearby village by floatplane. We then go pick up the once a week mail by skiff, braving rain, snow and waves to get it. Not to mention the tide. Lugging a heavy bag of books up the beach is not on my dad's all-time favorite list, and I usually hear about it.

I remember having to walk a log to shore once, with the mail and library books in hand. The log was slippery on one end and I slid off, splashing into thigh-high water. I yanked the books out of reach of the water, but I'm afraid the mail didn't fare so well. I've even, though not recently, made the arduous trek by land to the village, packing mail and books to the post office.

What can I say? I love books.

Over the years the librarians have changed, but I've had wonderful relationships with all of them. I still keep in contact with some who left the library years ago, like Brooke, who's a Civil Air Patrol pilot on her downtime and built her own plane with her husband to fly Alaskan skies. Cheryl, Dian and Lynn were my librarians for many years. They were the ones who established putting the books in plastic at my request after I explained about the open skiff ride the books take to get to me, in all kinds of weather. They also understood that sometimes I couldn't make the due date on some books because of weather and they generously renewed the books until I could get them to them.

I didn't have Internet until this year, so they offered to look up research questions for me online and then mailed me, at their expense, stacks of print-outs. The time and effort they spent on figuring out exactly what I wanted never failed to impress me. I think librarians are next door to being mind readers, or at least very insightful psychologists. Besides uncannily always knowing exactly which book out of several on a topic I would prefer, they would leave no stone uncovered when it came to Interlibrary Loan requests. They made sure the other libraries understood my situation--mail once a week, weather permitting--and gave me lots of time to read the books and get them back.

This year, JPL and its Mail Services program has been nominated for the National Medal for Museum and Library Service. They certainly deserve it. Originally they served SE Alaska, but now they serve the entire state, sending books hundreds of miles to isolated, far flung places few people have ever heard of, let alone visited. They pay for the postage to send materials to patrons, we pay to send them back by library rate in their dedicated, self-addressed mailing bags.

There are four employees in the Mail Services program, now that they have the entire state to take care of. They are Max, Marjorie, Julie and Ani and I have with them the relationship you can only have with librarians. You know what I'm talking about, right? You trust them and share your interests with them in a way you might not with anyone else, and you feel that they will do all they can to further your interests and introduce you to new books and materials that are tailored to your likes and curiosity.

Let me introduce you to them.

Max was originally encouraged to work part time at the library by his sister who already worked there, while he applied to medical school. Two years later he found himself taking on a permanent position in the Mail Services program.

"Although it was not my intention to remain at the library permanently," he says, "I'm proud of the work I do and the positive changes I've made to this department to ensure it runs efficiently....In particular, I remember a note you sent us which described the epic journey just to retrieve and return library books, a chore we in the city certainly take for granted. I related your experience to some out-of-town friends who were visiting, who said that your story was the most influential advocacy for literacy they'd ever heard. I think this is absolutely true."

Max spends some of his time away from the library climbing mountains and ridges, getting lost in alpine meadows and muskegs, and wading through waist high flooded running trails. "My sister," he explains, "is my training partner and best friend, so it's quite convenient that our cubicles share a wall, allowing us to scheme while we're working."

Marjorie, unlike many who love books, is "not an introvert." She moved to Alaska with her husband from New York City and started working for JPL right away, despite not having any library science training or degree. "But that's Alaska, is it not?"

She took time away from the library for several years to have a family, travel and cope with her husband's successful battle with cancer. In 2013 she returned to the library as Curator of Public Programs (in the museum) and a year later also began working in the Mail Services department. "I think my favorite part of serving our remote customers," she says, "is what I might call 'the hunt.' It has been fun to research on behalf of so many people who are not necessarily reading what I read, and learning about different authors, topics, sources of recommendations, etc."

What Marjorie loves about Alaska is the sense of community--"I love the community for support and friendship and the daily, casual connection I have to almost everybody I run into"--and the way the environment shapes everything and everyone--"most folks value it and interact with it almost daily, fishing, hiking, skiing, photographing, etc."--and the opportunities--"For example, one of my daughters is passionate about music and theatre and she gets terrific opportunities to do real, big things, like she sang a solo with the Juneau Symphony this past June....In a larger city, competition would be fierce for those things....in Juneau she gets these opportunities. And I got the opportunity to be hired at the library, despite the lack of a library science degree!"

Julie has lived in different areas of Alaska, from the largest cities to small communities in the Interior, and finally in SE Alaska in Juneau. She says, "Having come from North Dakota, I've always enjoyed the milder climates in Alaska."

She was a newspaper editor in Fairbanks and Anchorage, taught journalism at the University of Alaska at Fairbanks and had her own business. It was when she was in McGrath that she reluctantly became a librarian and found she loved it. "Who knew that all that time I spent reading and working with authors and illustrators would come in handy!"

She loves selecting books and movies for Alaska's far-flung residents, and spending as much time as possible outdoors. She also, like so many Alaskans, enjoys quilting.

Ani grew up in Juneau and was always a reader, as well as studying piano and active in theater. "Reading," she says, "is still always near the top of my list of what I'd rather be doing, preferably at home, on my couch, with a cup of tea."

Like many people who grew up in Alaska, Ani has tried her hand at a wide range of occupations: pre-school teacher, piano teacher, commercial troller, gardener, book-keeper and, of course, librarian. This

last, and current, job, is her favorite. "I love trying to match the right books with the right people, and I love spending that much time immersed in books. I always have way too many books checked out."

She's married with three kids, who are all readers so she gets to be their personal librarian as well. She also loves hiking and spending time outside.

I recently had an online conversation with avid readers who shared with me their love of libraries and librarians. One of them shared this story: "My late brother was hired to manage an old-style ice cream parlor years ago. He took out a bunch of library books about ice cream and never returned them. I returned them for him (he'd moved to another city) expecting a large fine. The library rep said due to my honesty, there was NO charge....My late mom was a librarian at a public library."

I think that anyone who has contact with librarians at a formative age never forgets that first love of books. One of my closest friends is a former school librarian and we trade books through the mail, all the time.

Another online poster said: "I loved the creaking floors, the long wooden tables and the librarians. They knew magical things....They knew where the good books were." The library of her childhood has since changed, but what has not changed, "is the kindness of the librarians."

I responded that libraries are the repository of the world's knowledge monitored and shared by some of the most intelligent, funny, caring people around. And then I told them about the Juneau Public Library and its Mail Services librarians. They were instantly interested and hoped that the library wins the award they have been nominated for. Readers love libraries and librarians....how could we not?

I don't think I'm biased in thinking that my library and the librarians are special and I hope they win the National Medal for Museum and Library Service, which "honors outstanding institutions that make significant and exceptional contributions to their communities. Selected institutions demonstrate extraordinary approaches to public service, exceeding the expected levels of community outreach."

You deserve it, all of you, over the years, who have ever worked in the Mail Services department.

Thank you.

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This post came with pictures, which you can view on Ms. Neilson's blog at <http://www.alaskaforreal.com/blog/love-affair-with-the-library>

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